

# NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

## FIREBREAK

(Feet)  
CODE 394

### DEFINITION

A strip of bare land or vegetation that retards fire.

### PURPOSES

- To prevent the spread of wildfire
- To control prescribed burns.

### CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On all land uses where protection from wildfire is needed or prescribed burning is applied.

### CRITERIA

Firebreaks may be temporary or permanent and shall consist of fire resistant vegetation, non-flammable materials, bare ground, or a combination of these.

Firebreaks will be of sufficient width and length to contain the expected fire.

Firebreaks shall be located to minimize risk to the resources being protected, including locating on the contour where practicable to minimize risk of soil erosion.

Plant species selected for vegetated firebreaks will be non-invasive, comprised of attributes making them capable of retarding fire, and easy to maintain.

Erosion control measures shall prevent sediment from leaving the site.

Comply with applicable laws and regulations, including New Mexico Best Management Practices (BMPs).

All practices and procedures that involve ground-disturbing activities will be in compliance with applicable

Cultural Resource Protection laws, regulations, and policies.

### CONSIDERATIONS

Use barriers such as streams, lakes, ponds, rock cliffs, roads, skid trails, landings, drainage canals, railroads, utility right-of-ways, cultivated land, or other areas as existing firebreaks.

Attempt to locate firebreaks near ridge crests and valley bottoms. If the winds are predictable, firebreaks should be located perpendicular to the wind and on the windward side of the area to be protected.

Select plant species that will enhance the needs of wildlife in the area.

Design and layout should include multiple compatible uses.

Consider cultural resources and environmental concerns such as threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, natural areas, and wetlands.

### PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for applying this practice shall be prepared for each site and recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, and narrative statements in the conservation plan and the burn plan or other acceptable documentation.

### OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Mow or graze vegetative firebreaks to avoid a build-up of dead litter and to control weeds.

Inspect for and remove woody materials such as dead limbs and blown down trees and remove them from the firebreak.

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

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Inspect firebreaks annually and rework bare ground firebreaks as necessary to keep them clear of flammable vegetation.

Repair erosion control measures as necessary to ensure proper function.

Access by vehicles or people will be controlled to prevent damage to the firebreak.

Bare ground firebreaks, which are no longer needed, will be stabilized. See Practice 612 for site preparation, species recommendations and methods.

### **References:**

Forest Fire: Control and Use, Kenneth P. Davis.  
McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc, New York, 1959.

Fuelbreaks and Other Fuel Modifications for Wildland Fire Control, Agriculture Handbook No. 499, USDA-Forest Service, 1977.

Guidelines and Criteria for Wildfire Hazard Areas,  
Colorado State Forest Service and Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado, 1974.